NAT. HIST. BULL. SIAM SOC. 52(2): 217–220, 2004

Orange-headed Thrush *(Zoothera citrina)* Eating Elastic Bands

Refuse from human activities has frequently been found to be hazardous to wildlife (ROTHSTEIN, 1973; BROWN *ET AL.*, 1981; PETTIT *ET AL.*, 1981). Here I report the ingestion of elastic bands by an Orange-headed Thrush *(Zoothera citrina)* in Khao Yai National Park.

On 13 January 2004 I was bird watching within 20 m of the restaurant at the Pha Kluay Mai Campsite, Khao Yai National Park, Prachin Buri Province (14°26' N, 101°24' E). Food waste is regularly discarded behind the restaurant on a muddy area at the edge of evergreen forest. This attracts a number of birds including thrushes (Turdidae), babblers (Timaliidae), Coral-billed Ground Cuckoo *(Carpococcoyx renauldi)* and Red Junglefowl *(Gallus gallus)*. On this occasion I was watching an Orange-headed Thrush foraging on the ground and saw it pick up a circular, red elastic band with its bill which it then beat against the ground and promptly swallowed. During the following 5–10 minutes I observed it consume two more elastic bands and no other prey items. The bands were 28 mm in diameter with a thickness of 1 mm and bands of this type are widely used to seal all manner of plastic bags and containers, especially takeaway food items. Earthworms form a major part of the diet of thrushes (MEYER DE SCHAUENSEE, 1984) and this individual presumably mistook the elastic bands for its usual prey. Although in this case I was not able to determine the fate of the thrush, ingesting such debris can obstruct the gut, lead to absorption of toxins, and reduce the absorption of nutrients from their real food resulting in slow death by poisoning or starvation (U.S FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE AND NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE, 1992). Several species of bird occurring at Khao Yai National Park, including other thrushes, robins (Turdidae) and pittas (Pittidae), are also known to feed on earthworms, (Meyer de Schauensee, 1984; LAMBERT & WOODCOCK, 1996) and could potentially be at risk from these elastic bands.

Whilst litter in general is an eye-sore it is instances like the above example that emphasize the potential adverse effects even such small innocent appearing waste could have on wildlife. That such an event was observed in a national park, where one might hope for better waste management and awareness of animal welfare, is of particular concern. While efforts are made to remove garbage from the park, with a regular collection service, much litter is still discarded along the roads, at campsites, restaurants and at the main tourist attractions such as the waterfalls and view points. There is clearly a need for more restrictions on the use and disposal of non-degradable items. Furthermore, with over half a million people entering the park annually (DNP, 2003), there is an urgent need to provide more information to visitors and people working in the park of the possible dangers to wildlife of inappropriate waste disposal.

Acknowledgments. I would like to thank G. A. Gale and P. D. Round for comments that improved this note and for encouraging me to write up this observation.

Received 1 August 2004; accepted 1 September 2004.

REFERENCES

BROWN, R. G. B., S. P. PARKER, D. E. GASKIN, AND M. R. SANDEMAN. 1981. The foods of great and sooty shearwaters *Puffinis gravis* and *P. griseus* in eastern Canadian waters. *Ibis* 123: 19–30.

Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plants Conservation (DNP). 2003. Facts and Figures on Thailand's National Parks and Protected Areas. Bangkok: DNP.

LAMBERT, F., AND M. WOODCOCK. 1996. *Pittas, Broadbills and Asities*. Pica Press, Robertsbridge, U.K.

MEYER DE SCHAUENSEE, R. 1984. *The Birds of China*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, Tokyo.

PETTIT, T. N., G. S. GRANT, AND G. C. WHITTOW. 1981. Ingestion of plastics by laysan albatross. *Auk* 98(4): 840–841.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service. 1992. Recovery Plan for U.S. Population of Leatherback Turtles.

ROTHSTEIN, S. I. 1973. Plastic particle pollution of the surface of the Atlantic Ocean: evidence from a seabird. *Condor* 75: 344–366.

Andrew J. Pierce
King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi
School of Bioresources and Technology
83 Moo. 8 Thakham, Bangkhunthien
Bangkok 10150
e-mail: andrew@pdti.kmutt.ac.th